General Assembly

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Sixty-fourth session
Agenda item 69 (b)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/64/439/Add.2 (Part II))]

64/173. Promotion of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on this question,

Reaffirming the importance of the goal of universal ratification of the United Nations human rights instruments,

Welcoming the significant increase in the number of ratifications of United Nations human rights instruments, which has especially contributed to their universality,

Reiterating the importance of the effective functioning of treaty bodies established pursuant to United Nations human rights instruments for the full and effective implementation of those instruments,

Recalling that, with regard to the election of the members of the human rights treaty bodies, the General Assembly as well as the former Commission on Human Rights recognized the importance of giving consideration in their membership to equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and representation of the principal legal systems and of bearing in mind that the members shall be elected and shall serve in their personal capacity, and shall be of high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights,

Reaffirming the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds, as well as of different political, economic and legal systems,

Recognizing that the United Nations pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally and that genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding,

Recalling that the General Assembly as well as the former Commission on Human Rights encouraged States parties to United Nations human rights treaties, individually and through meetings of States parties, to consider how to give better effect, inter alia, to the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of treaty bodies,

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Expressing concern at the regional imbalance in the current composition of the membership of some of the human rights treaty bodies,

Noting in particular that the status quo tends to be detrimental to the election of experts from some regional groups, in particular the African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean and Eastern European groups,

Convinced that the goal of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of human rights treaty bodies is perfectly compatible and can be fully realized and achieved in harmony with the need to ensure gender balance and the representation of the principal legal systems in those bodies and the high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights of their members,

1. *Reiterates* that the States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments should take into account, in their nomination of members to the human rights treaty bodies, that these committees shall be composed of persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights, consideration being given to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience, and to equal representation of women and men, and that members shall serve in their personal capacity, and also reiterates that, in the elections to the human rights treaty bodies, consideration shall be given to equitable geographical distribution of membership and to the representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems;

2. *Encourages* the States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments to consider and adopt concrete actions, inter alia, the possible establishment of quota distribution systems by geographical region for the election of the members of the treaty bodies, thereby ensuring the paramount objective of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of those human rights bodies;

3. *Urges* the States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments, including the bureau members, to include this matter in the agenda of each meeting and/or Conference of States Parties to those instruments in order to initiate a debate on ways and means to ensure equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, based on previous recommendations of the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council and the provisions of the present resolution;

4. *Recommends*, when considering the possible establishment of a quota by region for the election of the membership of each treaty body, the introduction of flexible procedures that encompass the following criteria:

(*a*) Each of the five regional groups established by the General Assembly must be assigned a quota of the membership of each treaty body in equivalent proportion to the number of States parties to the instrument that it represents;

(*b*) There must be provision for periodic revisions that reflect the relative changes in the geographical distribution of States parties;

(*c*) Automatic periodic revisions should be envisaged in order to avoid amending the text of the instrument when the quotas are revised;

5. *Stresses* that the process needed to achieve the goal of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of human rights treaty bodies can contribute to raising awareness of the importance of gender balance, the representation of the principal legal systems and the principle that the members of

the treaty bodies shall be elected and shall serve in their personal capacity, and shall be of high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights;

6. *Requests* the chairs of the human rights treaty bodies to consider at their next meeting the content of the present resolution and to submit, through the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, specific recommendations for the achievement of the goal of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies;

7. *Requests* the High Commissioner to submit concrete recommendations on the implementation of the present resolution to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session;

8. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the question at its sixty-sixth session under the item entitled "Promotion and protection of human rights".

65th plenary meeting
18 December 2009